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SUBJECT: GEORGIA: SECURITY INCIDENTS RAISE CONCERNS

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Summary and Comment. Three separate security incidents within the last week could indicate that the Russians, Abkhaz or South Ossetians may wish to bump up instability in the midst of the UNOMIG negotiations. South Ossetians set up a new checkpoint near Perevi on June 8 and continue to harass local inhabitants in the area, although Russians have begun to give restitution for stolen livestock.

The arrival of two Russian generals and the de facto South Ossetian "prosecutor general" to Karzmani on the South Ossetian side of the administrative boundary line June 10 seemed to help relieve tensions, though it remains unclear whether the Russians will make good on their promise to pull out of Perevi by June 15. On June 10, three blasts occurred late at night in Zugdidi, with one injury. Deputy Foreign Minister Giga Bokeria told visiting EUR A/S Gordon that the explosions are a reminder from the Russians that they can create these types of provocations whenever they wish. UNOMIG and EUMM told us that on June 11, Russian forces approached a Georgian checkpoint in Ganmukhuri, outside Abkhazia but north of the Enguri river, warning the Georgians that the territory was Abkhaz and the Georgians needed to leave. The Georgians replied that the next time the Russians approached, they might need to defend themselves. End Summary and comment.

PEREVI - KARZMANI: DISCORD BETWEEN SOUTH OSSETIANS AND RUSSIANS?

12. (SBU) The situation remains tense within the Russian-occupied village of Perevi, located in undisputed Georgian territory outside the western de facto "border" of South Ossetia (reftel A). The Russian military has promised to pull out by June 15, though it remains ambiguous whether they will cede control to their own border guards, the South Ossetians or the Georgians. Meanwhile, EUMM and OSCE reported that the South Ossetian militia set up a checkpoint just north of the Russian encampment. The monitors continue to hear reports of theft in the Perevi - Karzmani area, and the presence of South Ossetian forces so close to the Russian checkpoint worries locals.

13. (C) In a step towards reducing tensions, the number of armed South Ossetians in the Perevi area seems to have decreased since last week, and the Russians have begun returning property and offering villagers restitution for stolen livestock. The OSCE reported that two Russian generals and the South Ossetian de facto "prosecutor general" arrived in nearby Karzmani (across the administrative boundary line in South Ossetia) to ease tensions. The generals apparently enjoined the South Ossetian forces to withdraw from the area; shots were fired in the air, which the OSCE interpreted as an expression of tension between the officials and the militia. EUMM PolOff Rosaria Puglisi

detected a notable disconnect between the Russians and South Ossetians, with little evidence of coordination between the two sides.

**EXPLOSIONS IN ZUGDIDI: IS SOMEONE SENDING A MESSAGE?**

¶4. (SBU) Three explosions occurred on the night of June 10 in Zugdidi, south of the Abkhaz administrative boundary. UNOMIG reported that the largest of the blasts occurred before midnight in a cargo rail car behind the train station, while the second occurred shortly after midnight in a garbage can in front of the station. The final blast took place around 0300 at an unused factory near the local police station. According to an official government statement, one station. According to an official government statement, one electrician received severe injuries and was taken to the hospital. The MOIA later confirmed the injuries, but told us that the injuries were not as severe as originally reported.

¶5. (C) In a meeting with visiting EUR Assistant Secretary Gordon, Deputy Foreign Minister Giga Bokeria confirmed the UNOMIG reports, adding that the perpetrators used explosive trottol (TNT) and that although the Georgians have no suspects, initial analysis indicates Russian involvement. He intimated that these explosions were not intended to cause casualties and were executed by a well-informed group seeking to send a message in the midst of the ongoing discussions of UNOMIG's status in Abkhazia. He drew a parallel between the explosions occurring during A/S Gordon's visit to Tbilisi and the over-flight of Russian aircraft during former Secretary Rice's visit in July 2008. Bokeria stressed that the administrative boundary line between Abkhazia and undisputed Georgian territory is very porous, and it is impossible for the Georgian Government to stop infiltrations or to close the boundaries. He believes the explosions are a signal from the Russians that they can create these types of provocations whenever they wish.

**GANMUKHURI - MISUNDERSTANDING OR PROVOCATION?**

¶6. (C) On June 11 at 3 pm, EUMM and UNOMIG received reports from MOIA that Russian forces in an armored personnel carrier approached a Georgian police checkpoint in Ganmukhuri, south of the Abkhaz boundary and north of the Enguri river.

(Comment: Because of its precarious position, Ganmukhuri has been the source of much previous tension. See ref B. End comment.) Although they initially approached in an amicable manner, the Russians told the Georgians that the territory was Abkhaz and the Georgians needed to leave. (Comment: Considering Ganmukhuri's difficult location, it is conceivable that if these were some of the new border police, they may have made an honest mistake. However, considering the well-organized approach Russia has generally taken in regard to the territories, it seems more likely that this was a deliberate action on the part of the Russians. End comment). Although there was no violence, only a verbal confrontation, the Georgians suggested to the UN and EUMM monitors that the next time the Russians approached, they might need to defend themselves.

TEFFT